

SENATE—Thursday, July 20, 2000

The Senate met at 9:45 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised and His greatness is unsearchable. I will meditate on the glorious splendor of Your majesty.—Psalm 145: 3,5.

Let us pray:

We come humbly and gratefully to draw from Your divine intelligence what we need for today's deliberations and decisions. We thank You for the women and men of this Senate and their staffs who support their work. Help them humbly to ask for Your perspective on perplexities and then receive Your direction. Give them new vision, innovative solutions, and fresh enthusiasm. We commit this day to love and serve You with our minds. Today, when votes are counted on crucial decisions, help them neither to relish victory nor nurse discouragement in defeat but do everything to maintain the bond of unity in the midst of differences and then move forward. This we pray in the Name of the Prince of Peace who called us to be peacemakers. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable MIKE CRAPO, a Senator from the State of Idaho, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The able acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. CRAPO. Today the Senate will resume debate on the Agriculture appropriations bill. The Harkin amendment regarding beef is the pending amendment, and it is expected that a vote in relation to that amendment will occur during this morning's session. Senators should also be aware that it is the intention of the bill managers to complete action on this important bill by this afternoon. Therefore, votes can be expected throughout the day.

The Senate may also begin consideration of the conference report to ac-

company the Department of Defense appropriations bill during this evening's session.

I thank my colleagues for their attention.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CRAPO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The leadership time is reserved.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2001

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume consideration of H.R. 4461, which the clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4461) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2001, and other purposes.

Pending:

Reid (for Harkin) amendment No. 3938, to prohibit the use of appropriated funds to label, mark, stamp, or tag as "inspected and passed" meat, meat products, poultry, or poultry products that do not meet microbiological performance standards established by the Secretary of Agriculture.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

AMENDMENT NO. 3938

Mr. HARKIN. Parliamentary inquiry: Before I start and the clock starts ticking on me, where are we and what time are we operating under right now?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending business is the Harkin amendment No. 3938. There is no time limitation.

Mr. HARKIN. There is no time limit? The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I am sorry; I was under the mistaken impression that there was a time limit. I stand corrected. I want to talk for a few minutes about the pending amendment.

In some conversations I had last night and earlier this morning previous

to coming to the floor, I found that there may be some misconceptions about my amendment and what it seeks to do. So I would like to take the time to try to clarify it.

I did not think there would be opposition to it. It was merely to clarify a situation that has arisen in a court case in Texas. So in the next few minutes I will try, as best I can, to try to outline it and clarify exactly what this amendment is and what it intends to do.

Everyone in the food chain, from the farm on through to the table, has a vital stake in the USDA food safety and inspection system for meat and poultry products. This goes back many years. As the years have evolved, and as our processes for growing, slaughtering, processing, packaging, transporting, and the selling of meat and meat products and poultry products has changed, we have changed the way we do things.

As Secretary Glickman once I think so adroitly explained, the days of poke and sniff have to be over. We need new inspection standards because of the rapidity of the lines, the tremendous increase in the production of meat and meat products, which are good sources of protein for our people and for export. We need the change. So that is what we have done.

But the linchpin in all of this is consumer confidence. Our food safety system must adequately protect consumers. It must assure consumers that their food is safe. If consumers lack confidence in the safety of meat and poultry products, they will not be good customers. That means less demand and lower prices and income for livestock and poultry producers, as well as for our packers and processors.

On May 25, a huge cloud of uncertainty was cast over USDA's meat and poultry inspection system when the Federal district court for the Northern District of Texas held that USDA does not have the statutory authority to enforce its pathogen reduction standards for salmonella in ground beef.

The pathogen reduction standards are a critical part of the new food safety system which was adopted by the USDA in 1996 in the hazard analysis critical control point and pathogen reduction rule. It is otherwise known by its acronym HACCP, something that many of us in the Senate and the House have worked on for many years to bring about.

That system was designed to protect human health by reducing the levels of bacteria contamination in meat and poultry products. I might add that the